

Appl. No. 10/027,024  
Amdt. Dated April 30, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of January 30, 2004

**Amendment to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of producing a printing plate in a printing machine, said method comprising

providing a thermal transfer film carrying a thermal transfer material in proximity to a surface of a printing plate carrier in a printing machine,

selectively ablating said thermal transfer material using a laser image-setting unit to selectively apply said thermal transfer material directly to the surface of said printing plate carrier, thereby forming a mask directly on said printing plate carrier in said printing machine, said mask defining image points and non-image points directly on said printing plate carrier by covering only one of either said image points or said non-image points on said carrier, and

using said mask produce a printing plate in said printing machine.

Claim 2 (previously presented): A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is used to produce a gravure printing plate.

Claim 3 (previously presented): A method as in claim 2 wherein said mask is an etching mask which is applied to the surface of the printing plate carrier so that it covers said non-image points, said method further comprising etching gravure printing cells by applying acid where said thermal transfer material has not been applied to said surface of said carrier.

Appln. No. 10/027,024  
Amdt. Dated April 30, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of January 30, 2004

Claim 4 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 3 wherein said thermal transfer material is selectively applied to a variable area of said surface with a constant thickness during ablation of said transfer material using said laser image setting unit.

Claim 5 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 1 wherein said mask is used to produce a flexographic printing plate.

Claim 6 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 5 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a light sensitive coating which forms said surface, said mask being a copying mask which is applied to the surface of said carrier, said method comprising selectively exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp.

Claim 7 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 6 wherein said copying mask is a positive copying mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 8 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 6 wherein said mask is a negative copying mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 9 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 1 wherein said printing plate is a screen-printing screen.

Appln. No. 10/027,024  
Amdt. Dated April 30, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of January 30, 2004

Claim 10 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a copying mask.

Claim 11 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said printing plate carrier comprises a network-like fabric structure which forms said surface, said fabric structure being coated throughout with a light sensitive material, said method comprising applying said copying mask to said fabric structure and exposing said light-sensitive coating through said mask by means of a copying lamp.

Claim 12 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a positive mask, said copying mask covering said non-image points.

Claim 13 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 10 wherein said copying mask is a negative mask, said copying mask covering said image points.

Claim 14 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 9 wherein said mask is a screen-printing mask, said screen-printing screen being produced by electroplating.

Claim 15 (withdrawn): A method as in claim 14 wherein said printing plate carrier has a metallic surface, said method comprising

applying said screen-printing mask to the surface of said printing plate carrier, said mask serving as a positive mask which insulates said surface covers said image points, and

Appln. No. 10/027,024  
Amdt. Dated April 30, 2004  
Reply to Office Action of January 30, 2004

exposing the non-insulated parts of said surface to an electrolyte, thereby depositing metal where said material is not applied to form said screen printing screen.

Claim 16 (cancelled).

Claim 17 (previously presented): A method as in claim 1 wherein said thermal transfer material is a polymer material.